

Elmira Female College,
Cowles Hall
Park Place & W. Washington Ave.
Elmira
Chemung County
New York

HABS No. NY-6019

HABS
NY
8-ELM,
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Addendum to:

Elmira Female College, Cowles Hall
Park Place and W. Washington Avenue
Elmira
Chemung County
New York

HABS No. NY-6019

Also known as Elmira College, Cowles Hall

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to:

ELMIRA FEMALE COLLEGE, COWLES HALL
(Elmira College, Cowles Hall)

HABS No. NY-6019

ADDRESS:

Park Place and W. Washington Avenue, Elmira, Chemung County, New York.

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION:

1854-1855. Cornerstone laid July 6, 1854; dedicated September 1855.

ARCHITECT:

Ward Farrar.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Elmira College (Elmira Collegiate Seminary, Elmira Female College) is historically significant as the first college in the nation to offer women a degree in higher education comparable to that offered by men's colleges. It was an important model for other women's colleges that were established during the post Civil War years. Cowles Hall, originally the college's entire physical plant, is a five-story Romanesque octagonal structure based on the octagonal concept originated by Orson Fowler. A chapel was included in the building. The college became coeducational in 1969.

MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION:

Brick.

SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE:

Five stories in height. See page 3 for a floor plan.

EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE:

Radiating arms in east, west and north sides of the building. Corbeling at roofline; pilasters; round-arched and segmental arched openings with cast-iron label stops; water table; rectangular ground floor windows with flat arched heads; porticoes on front and rear side entrances; elevated stair entrance on south side of the main octagon. Matching small octagon of wood construction is on top of the main octagon, with four narrow round-arched windows and corbeling on each of its eight sides.

ELMIRA FEMALE COLLEGE; COWLES HALL
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INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE:

Not recorded.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS:

Original exterior chimneys removed 1945; north arm (wing) added 1860; east arm added 1868; interior changes made to meet changing needs and regulations (dormitory converted to offices 1978).

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Barber, Charles. Elmira College: The First 100 Years. New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1955.

Hansen, Esther V. "Which Was The First Women's College ?" Vassar Alumni Magazine, May 1957.

Woody, Thomas. A History of Women's Education in the United States. New York: The Science Press, 1929.

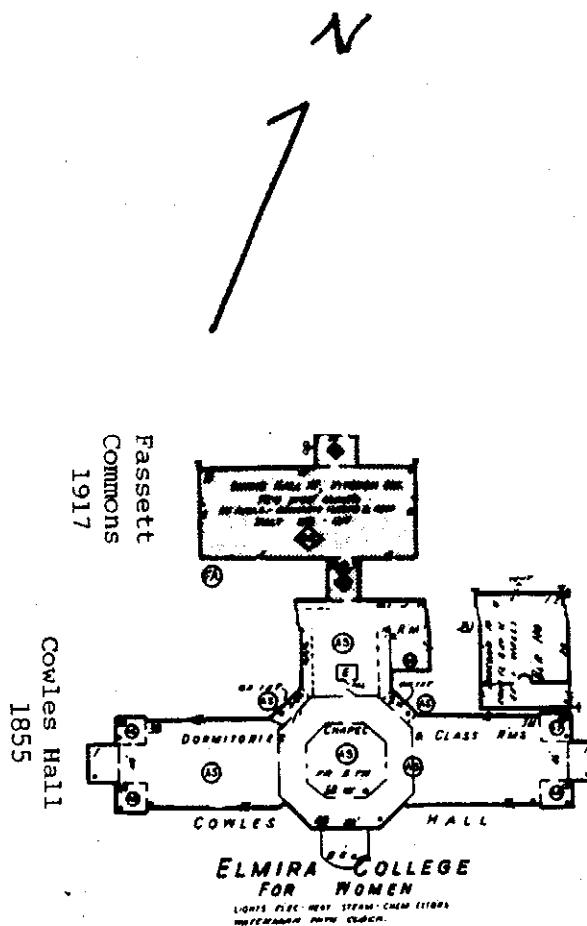
SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Elmira College Old Campus, 1984.

PREPARER:

Susan McCown, HABS Architectural Historian, May 9, 1986.

ELMIRA FEMALE COLLEGE, COWLES HALL
 (Elmira College, Cowles Hall)
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Reproduced from 1981 Sanborn Map for
 Elmira, Chemung County, New York

Scale: 1 inch = 100 feet